

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJ: US MINIMUM ISSUE IN FRENCH ELECTION CAMPAIGN

1. FOREIGN POLICY IN GENERAL HAS OF COURSE TAKEN A BACK SEAT TO DOMESTIC ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE FRENCH ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IN CONTRAST TO FRENCH ELECTIONS SINCE DE GAULLE CAME TO POWER IN 1958, POLITICAL CANDIDATES HAVE NOT SEEN FIT, IN THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN, TO RAISE IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY THE ISSUE OF US DOMINATION OF FRANCE. WITH VOTERS STARTING TO THE POLLS SUNDAY, THE US HAS BEEN, TO ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES A NON-ISSUE. RATHER THAN ATTEMPTING TO PAINT OPPONENTS AS PRO-US, POLITICIANS OF BOTH THE RIGHT AND LEFT (EXCEPT THE COMMUNISTS, OF COURSE) SENSED AN ADVANTAGE IN THIS LEGISLATIVE ELECTORAL YEAR TO SEE AND BE SEEN WITH PRESIDENT CARTER DURING HIS JANUARY VISIT TO FRANCE.

2. INDEED, THE CAMPAIGN HAS TURNED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON ECONOMIC ISSUES, WITH THE MAJOR PARTIES OFFERING THEIR SOLUTIONS TO THE NATION'S ILLS.

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3. THE ONLY BRIEF EXCEPTION TO THE U.S. AS A NON-ISSUE INVOLVED THE JANUARY 11 STATE DEPARTMENT STATEMENT EXPRESSING THE U.S. VIEW TOWARD COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT. WHILE THE STATEMENT WAS MEANT FOR ITALY, ALL FRENCH POLITICIANS RALLIED BRIEFLY AND EXPECTEDLY TO THE FLAG OF FRENCH INDEPENDENCE. THE

DEBATE THEN RESUMED ITS ORIGINAL CONTOURS. OTHER U.S.-RELATED SECONDARY ISSUES INCLUDED THE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS, INTERNATIONAL MONETARY POLICY AND THE ROLE OF THE DOLLAR.

4. WE CAN OFFER A FEW CLUES TO THE REASONS FOR THE CHANGE. WHILE DE GAULLE STILL CASTS A SHADOW, TIME HAS RETIRED MANY OF HIS LEGIONS. MOREOVER, DE GAULLE DID LEAVE THE FRAMEWORK OF AN INDEPENDENT FRANCE WHICH SEEMS TO SATISFY MOST FRENCHMEN.

5. INDEED, WE NOTE PARTICULARLY IN OUR CONTACTS WITH MEDIA PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS THAT THEY OFFER WIDELY DIFFERING CONCEPTS OF THE U.S. AND OF THE FRENCH ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. THE YOUNGER GROUP, ON BALANCE, NO LONGER POINT TO THE U.S. AS THE PROBLEM, AND SEEM MORE REALISTIC AND OBJECTIVE.

6. CERTAINLY, WITH A HIGH LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT, WITH THE ECONOMIC GAPS BETWEEN THE CLASSES, WITH PROMISED REFORMS YET TO BE FULFILLED, THE CAMPAIGN FOCUSED ON ISSUES CLOSER TO HOME.

7. ADDITIONALLY, THE LAST YEAR HAS SEEN AN OUTPOURING OF WARMTH BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS IN THE WAKE OF THE BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS WHICH RECALLED THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMMON VALUES WHICH WE SHARE.

8. ALL THIS DOESN'T TRANSLATE INTO ANY SUDDEN SYMMETRY OF INTERESTS IN FRENCH-AMERICAN RELATIONS, BUT IT DOES SIGNIFY THAT THE 1978 CANDIDATES SAW LESS POLITICAL ADVANTAGE IN PROVIDING THE ANTI-U.S. CLICHES OF THE PAST.
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